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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; US NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE ON
TERRORISM; AMIA ATTACK ANNIVERSARY; US-LATIN AMERICAN TIES 07/18/07

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's leading international stories cover the latest US Intelligence Estimate, according to which Al Qaeda remains determined to mount attacks on major targets in the U.S.; Argentina's observation of the 13th anniversary of the criminal attack against the AMIA; and the status of the US-Latin American relationship.

2. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "Al Qaeda recovers strength and prepares attacks in the US"

Hugo Alconada Mon, daily-of-record "La Nacion's" Washington-based correspondent, writes (07/18) "Almost six years after the Bush administration launched the capture of Osama bin Laden, the US number one enemy stays alive and his whereabouts are still unknown. Even worse, Al Qaeda, the terrorist network he leads, intends to launch another attack in this country within three years, which will be as devastating as the September 11 attacks.

"The prediction, which could not appear more conclusive, is part of the National Intelligence Estimate, which is regularly prepared by the 16 US federal intelligence agencies. This NIE report was the broadest and most thorough in 20 years.

"The report raised several alarms. It warned that Al Qaeda 'could use its contacts in Iraq' to launch the attack and that Hezbollah could also attack the US in the event Bush orders an attack on its protective shadow, Iran.

"... In the opposition's view, the report was one more piece of evidence of White House lack of competence. They accused the White House of 'failing in its most basic duty,' which is protecting the US and capturing or killing Bin Laden...

"However, in the Bush administration and the G.O.P.'s view, the report is a breath of fresh air. On the one hand, it renews US public support for the 'global war on terrorism' and, on the other hand, it notes that no other attack has occurred in the country in almost six years that have passed, in contrast to Spain, Turkey and London, (which suffered attacks).

"In this way, the NIE would only have a damaging effect if an attack took place in the country during Bush's term in office. In this case, it would represent a tragic repetition of the alert US intelligence provided to the then newly elected president in August 2001 in Texas. The report, entitled 'Bin Laden has decided to attack the US,' which was overlooked by Bush and his staff until September 11."

- "AMIA Debts"

Leading "Clarín" carries an op-ed piece by Agustín Romero, professor of International Relations at the National University of Buenos Aires, who opines (07/18) "... One could say that Argentina has taken important steps to fight international terrorism, but many issues are still pending..."

"As a matter of fact, it is not understandable that, after having suffered two criminal acts of this kind in its own territory, Argentina lacks a clear definition of terrorism..."

"The country should soon have some anti-terrorist legislation consistent with international standards... Argentina has not yet declared organizations like Hezbollah or the Islamic Jihad illegal."

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